When violent movements succeed: A cross-case comparison of the guerrillas in Nicaragua and Guatemala

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1. Introduction

All individuals hold certain grievances. They argue that the economy is unfair, the government corrupt, important values not upheld, or that there is rampant discrimination. Individuals who share the same grievances can come together to try and solve them, thus creating a social movement. Social movements can differ wildly from one another. The goals, tactics, structure and membership may all differ depending on the movement. An important difference between social movements can be made by looking at the tactics. Some movements choose to solely utilise non-violent tactics while others do not shy away from using violence. Non-violent movements are argued by many researchers as being far more likely to succeed when compared to their violent counterparts (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2014; Muñoz & Anduiza, 2019). The use of violence thus does not seem beneficial, or rational, for achieving success. But certain social movements still utilise violence. And certain violent movements still manage to succeed against the odds. Why some violent movements manage to succeed is still a point of debate, with several differing explanations found in the current literature.

A region which has had extensive experience with violent social movements is Latin America. Numerous left-wing guerrilla movements rose up during the 1960s and 70s, most striving to overthrow right-wing dictatorial regimes backed by the United States (Booth, 1991). When looking at the region of Central America there are some stark differences in how these movements concluded. The guerrilla movement in Nicaragua, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), managed to successfully overthrow the government. The left-wing guerrilla movements in Guatemala, such as the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), were far less successful. These guerrillas were mostly crushed in a counterinsurgency by the Guatemalan government.

So why then do some violent movements still manage to come out on top, even with the odds stacked against them? To answer this question a cross-case comparison will be conducted with the goal of answering the following research question:

RQ: "Why do some violent social movements manage to succeed?"

2. <u>Literature review</u>

Violent movement success

Social movements, as defined by Goodwin and Jasper (2014), are: "A collective, organized, sustained, and noninstitutional challenge to authorities, powerholders, or cultural beliefs and practices." (p. 238). Violent movements are a sub-group of this wider phenomenon. Authors like Chenoweth & Stephan (2014) and Muñoz & Anduiza (2019) note how these violent movements often have a far lower success rate when compared to non-violent counterparts. Fortna (2015) analysed the use of terrorism in a civil war and found that using violence makes political gains far harder to achieve. Using violence as a tactic does thus not seem rational if a movement wants to achieve its goal. Due to the apparent irrationality of using violent tactics, there has been a lot of literature dedicated to explaining why some movements decide to utilise them (Earl, 2011; Davenport, 2007; Della Porta, 2018; Pearlman, 2021).

Current literature has also tried to explain why some violent movements do manage to succeed. Authors have come up with a range of different theories and explanations. Byman (2008) argues that the government with its actions is the main factor influencing violent movement success. He states that making a differentiation between moderates and radicals during a counterinsurgency is important to defeat a violent movement, otherwise it may instead strengthen it. Certain assets, like an in-group police force, might help the government make such a differentiation. Dix (1984) also states that the government plays a critical part in violent movement success, but he focuses on the type of regime. A so-called closed regime, such as a personalistic dictatorship, often eliminates large parts of society. The groups which are not given positions of power eventually form a 'negative' coalition with radicals to oust the regime.

Barrera (2009) on the other hand argues that success is mostly determined by the efforts of a violent movement to diversify its support base. He states that movements which try to maximise support, thus also maximising their resources, have a far better chance of succeeding. These movements try to garner this mass public support by altering their message depending on the group they are targeting.

The influence of foreign actors on the success of a violent movement is a more disputed factor. Some like Dix (1984) argue that it does not play a huge part in determining movement success. Domínguez (1986) on the other hand argues that foreign support can indeed greatly increase the probability of violent movement success. International actors can

provide a safe haven for the movement to retreat to and give it important materialistic support like weapons and money. Foreign actors can also aid the incumbent regime, which according to Weitz (1986) can also influence violent movements. In the context of Latin America, Weitz (1986) even argues: "Whenever the American government firmly opposed the insurgency, the rebellion failed. When the administration declined to support the government, the guerrillas triumphed." (p. 406).

Guerrillas in Latin America

One area of the world which experienced nearly continent-wide violent movements was Latin America. During the 1960s and 1970s left-wing guerrilla movements spread like wildfire (Wickham-Crowley, 1990). Most of these guerrilla movements aspired to overthrow the government and introduce the teachings of Marxism-Leninism or Maoism. Right-wing dictatorships were common all throughout the continent, often openly backed by the domestic military and covertly by the United States (Brands, 2011). Booth (1991) argues that these repressive dictatorships created a feeling of resentment among both young urbanite students, which came into contact with Marxism at university, and rural peasants who experienced poor living conditions. The guerrillas thus tried to rid their country of the economic inequalities but also of US influence which they saw as imperialistic (Wickham-Crowley, 1990).

The Cuban revolution is often seen as the event which kick-started the left-wing insurgency period in Latin America (Sand, 2019; Wickham-Crowley, 2014). The Cuban revolution showed to the disgruntled students and peasants that it was possible for an armed insurrection to successfully overthrow a US-backed dictatorship. Legacies stemming from the Cuban revolution, such as the foco theory, in turn impacted the tactics and methods of the subsequent left-wing guerrillas (Childs, 1995).

Central America also experienced its fair share of left-wing guerrillas during this period. Three of the five 'large' nations in Central America had to deal with guerrilla movements; namely Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador. The US also seemed more invested in this region, as Domínguez (1986) states: "The impact of the United States was far more significant on Central than on South American countries." (p. 812). What is notable when looking at the cases in Central America is that there were large variations in outcomes, which is interesting in a region where the nations were very similar both culturally and politically (Booth, 1991; Wickham-Crowley, 2014). In Nicaragua, the guerrilla movement

managed to successfully overthrow the government and take the reigns of power. In El Salvador, the guerrillas managed to coerce the government into signing a peace treaty. The guerrilla movements in Guatemala met a far worse fate. A vicious and nearly genocidal counterinsurgency of the government marked the beginning of the end for the guerrillas (Wickham-Crowley, 2014).

Summary

Looking at the existing literature shows that Latin America has had its fair share of violent social movements. Numerous left-wing guerrilla groups rose up to challenge economic inequalities and topple governments which they saw as repressive and dominated by US interests. While many guerrilla movements rose up, few were successful. This further begs the question of why some of these guerrillas did manage to succeed.

The existing literature does not give an inconclusive and encompassing answer. A wide range of authors all argue that different actors and processes play an essential role. There is thus still a lot of ambiguity and contradicting arguments found in the current literature on the question of why some violent movements manage to succeed.

3. Theoretical framework

Governmental actions: Regime narrowing & repression

A violent movement influences the regime it tries to overthrow, but the regime in turn also influences the violent movement. As Byman (2008) argues: "The reaction of the state is often the most important factor in the movement's overall success or failure." (p. 191).

Governments can undertake a counterinsurgency to try and defeat a violent movement. The way such a counterinsurgency is conducted can have massive consequences on the potential success of the violent movement. If a state takes a too indiscriminate approach they risk alienating large parts of society, in turn increasing sympathy for the violent movement (Byman, 2008). If the government does not crack down on a violent movement it can be seen as weak and unfit to govern. The counterinsurgency must thus convince the populace that the costs of joining a violent movement outweigh the potential benefits, and do this without alienating additional parts of society (Chiang, 2021).

To enact a balanced approach a government must know who to target. Governments

who take a too heavy-handed approach often do not differentiate in their counterinsurgency between radicals and moderates (Byman, 2008). This can potentially alienate the moderate parts of society, such as the middle class, possibly driving them to support the violent movement. The best way such a differentiation could be made would be with an in-group police force. Individuals embedded in the community have the best ability to make a differentiation between radicals and moderates. Such a balanced approach takes away both potential support for a violent movement and diminishes its strength, both of which decrease the chance of the violent movement succeeding.

Dix (1984) theorizes that the structure of a regime can impact the possible success of a violent movement. He classifies authoritarian regimes as either closed or open. Closed regimes are those which 'narrow' down the power to a select few, with at its head often an overarching personalistic dictator. Such a regime can easily alienate powerful actors, such as the upper class or military, which are left outside this small circle of power. This can lead to a so-called 'negative' coalition between the alienated groups and the violent movement. They might not share the same political views but still cooperate to oust the current regime. Such a negative coalition is less likely in an 'open' authoritarian government. In these regimes, important actors such as the military and influential elites are involved in the governance of the nation and given positions of power. This in turn ensures their loyalty and prevents a negative coalition.

From this theory, the following hypothesis can be drawn up:

H1: "A *closed government and a counterinsurgency which does not differentiate between moderates and radicals greatly increases the chance of a violent movement succeeding.*"

Movement tactics: Dual strategy & urban cooperation

The more support a violent movement enjoys the more resources it gains, thus increasing its chances of success (Barrera, 2009). Violent movements can influence and expand their support base with the rhetoric they espouse. Barrera (2009) theorises that a so-called dual strategy can prove especially useful in garnering a large base of support. The dual strategy is compromised of two parts, an internal and an external one. The internal part is rhetoric which focuses on the main support base of the movement, such as the peasantry. In this internal part, the movement espouses more radical ideas which speak to their core support base. The goal of this 'internal' rhetoric is thus to cultivate a strong base of support,

in turn creating a solid base of operations. The external part is focused on more moderate audiences, such as middle-class urbanites and foreign states. These messages are far less radical and often espouse more abstract ideals which are easy to get behind, such as democracy and freedom. The goal of this dual strategy is to cultivate mass popular support, which in turn will help the movement succeed.

Another way a violent movement can try to grow its support base is to attack symbolic targets (Greig, Mason & Hamner, 2016). These attacks keep the movement in the limelight and show that the government is vulnerable. This can in turn generate support: "The rebels' demonstrated capacity to sustain military operations will generate more civilian support, which will further enhance the rebels' capacity to mount and sustain military operations." (p. 527).

Weitz (1986) and Childs (1995) also state the importance of cooperation between urbanites and the violent movement. Cooperation between rural-based violent movements and urbanites boosts success in two ways. It can greatly increase the chance of a widespread national insurrection and it can give important legitimacy to the violent movement. Barrera (2009) also backs up this theory: "As the revolutionary movement grows in both urban and rural regions, the government is overwhelmed allowing a successful strike against its forces, bringing the revolutionaries to power." (p. 20).

From this theory, the following hypothesis can be drawn up:

H2: *"The tactics and efforts of a violent movement to attract and cooperate with various social groups greatly increases the chance of the movement succeeding."*

Foreign influence: On the movement & government

Foreign aid or support can be utilised by both the guerrillas and the government. Foreign assistance can facilitate several elements which greatly increase violent movement success. One important feature of foreign support towards a violent movement is that it increases its survivability (Domínguez, 1986; Singh & Mei, 1965). Foreign states can provide a safe haven for a violent movement to retreat to. Such a safe haven is needed for a movement to evade total destruction during a counterinsurgency (Barrera, 2009; Byman, 2008). Foreign support can also help guerrillas evade rookie mistakes and provide them with essential supplies such as money and weapons. All of these factors ensure that the violent movement is far more adept to survive a counterinsurgency. As Byman (2008) states: "...

endurance is key to success." (p. 188).

Weitz (1986) also theorizes that foreign support of a government's counterinsurgency can greatly dimmish the chance of success for a violent movement. Foreign advisors can teach counterinsurgency tactics to the armed forces. Such tactics might focus on preventing civilian casualties, which in turn retains popular support for the military. Especially the training of an in-group police force, such as the domestic police, can have a great effect on diminishing the strength of a violent movement (Byman, 2008).

From this theory, the following hypothesis can be drawn up:

H3: *"Foreign support to a movement, and the lack of it to a government, greatly increases the chance of a violent movement succeeding."*

4. Methodology

Research design

To answer the research question of this thesis a cross-case comparison will be conducted. A cross-case comparison compares two different cases with one another and is thus a small-N case study. The two violent social movements will consist of one which succeeded and one which failed. The comparison of two cases with different outcomes will hopefully allow me to analyse which processes and factors play a role in determining violent movement success.

The cases will be chosen according to a Most Similar System Design (MSSD). An MSSD means that the chosen cases are as similar as possible. The benefit of having similar cases is that it filters out a lot of external variables (Anckar, 2008). This in turn increases the reliability of the relationship between the independent (IV) and dependent (DV) variables.

There are several potential IVs outlined in the theoretical framework. Due to the qualitative nature of this study most IVs will not be measured quantitatively. The first potential IV is government type and government actions during a counterinsurgency. Some measurements for this IV will be: influential elites given economic privileges, the presence of an in-group police force and counterinsurgency casualties occurring in either a rural or urban environment. The second IV is the efforts of a movement to cultivate and cooperate with moderate urban supporters. This will be measured by looking at which groups the guerrillas cooperate with, if the movement's rhetoric changes depending on the target audience and what the intent of the violent actions is. The third potential IV is foreign support. This will be

measured as the presence of material support, if a state provides a safe haven and if a foreign actor is actively training governmental or guerrilla forces.

The dependent variable is violent movement success. The goal of guerrilla movements is often to overthrow an incumbent government and enact social and political change (Dix, 1984). Violent movement success in this thesis is thus defined as the ousting of the incumbent regime and the movement's takeover of the government apparatus. Guerrillas who have signed a settlement with the government are thus not classified as successful, even though such an agreement might be in their favour.

Case selection

When looking at violent movements, and especially guerrilla movements, Latin America is special in how widespread these movements were (Wickham-Crowley, 1990). Central America during this time can be seen as a diverse representation of the wider continent; with some movements succeeding, some failing, and some not even getting off the ground. The states of Nicaragua and Guatemala are well-suited for an MSSD. Both states were typified by right-wing dictatorial regimes, significant economic inequalities, US support and a similar culture stemming from their period under Spanish colonization (Booth, 1991; Wickham-Crowley, 1990).

Nicaragua was the only country in Central America where a guerrilla movement succeeded. The guerrillas in Guatemala on the other hand were virtually destroyed by governmental forces. Both states and movements are thus a good representation of a violent movement succeeding and another failing. The case of El Salvador, the other nation in Central America to experience a guerrilla movement, ended in a ceasefire which included many beneficial clauses for the guerrillas (Dix, 1984). This case is thus not selected due to it not corresponding to the aforementioned conceptualisation of success.

The violent movements selected are the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) from Nicaragua and the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR) from Guatemala. Both rose up during the beginning of the 1960s, adhered to a Marxist-Leninist ideology and received help from the communist state Cuba (Prevost, 1990).

There are though some differences between both movements which need to be mentioned. The FSLN was the main and for the most part only guerrilla group in Nicaragua. Guatemala had a far greater diversity of guerrilla movements, including next to the FAR also groups like the EGP and ORPA. To correctly represent the variety in the guerrilla scene the

EGP and ORPA will not be excluded from the analysis. The FAR though remains the oldest guerrilla movement in Guatemala and is the origin of subsequent movements like the EGP and ORPA, the FAR will thus be the basis for the analysis (Wickham-Crowley, 2014).

The FSLN and FAR were also not active for the same amount of time. FSLN guerrilla activity ended with their victory in 1979. The FAR eventually merged into the URNG, which continued guerrilla activities till 1996 (Allison, 2006). To accurately compare both movements a specific timeframe will be utilised. The FSLN will be mostly analysed from 1970 to 1979 and the FAR from 1970 to 1982. In the 1970s both movements increased their activities and went through the most impactful changes (Gorman 1981, Prevost, 1990). The FAR will be analysed till 1982, this is seen as the endpoint of the second phase of the Guatemalan insurgency and after this date success was highly implausible (Sand, 2019).

Data collection

A qualitative content analysis will be conducted. A qualitative analysis is most appropriate for answering the 'why' research question (Sofaer, 1999). A qualitative approach can delve deeper into complicated processes which are hard to quantify, such as government structure and public perception. A qualitative analysis is thus useful for accurately describing and interpreting the effects of certain processes on violent movement success.

The content for the qualitative content analysis will be sourced from secondary sources. Especially academic research articles, doctoral dissertations and master's theses will be utilised. Scholars like Wickham-Crowley and LeoGrande, both renowned for their expertise in Latin America, will be helpful in giving a reliable and in-depth view on the movements. This expertise is reinforced by recently published master theses and doctoral dissertations which have the ability to provide more recent insights.

The different IV's all focus on different actors; some on the movement, some on the government and some on foreign states. Taking into account a wide range and variety of secondary sources hopefully provides an all-encompassing picture of how different processes influence violent movement success.

5. Analysis

To find evidence for the different theories and hypothesis both aforementioned guerrilla movements and the countries in which they operated will be analysed. The empirical evidence will hopefully give an answer to the three put-forward hypothesis. The empirical evidence of the cases will be divided into three parts: government actions (H1), movement tactics (H2) and foreign influence (H3). After the empirical evidence has been laid out both cases will be compared with one another. This comparison will link back to the previous theories and hopefully answer the put-forwards hypothesis.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front

Inception

The Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) was founded with the goal of overthrowing dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle who was in power since 1967. The Somoza family had ruled Nicaragua for decades, with Somoza's father and older brother having previously held the post of president (Pearson, 1979). Under the reign of the Somoza's political and economic inequalities were rampant (Blanc, 2012). The influence of the United States also angered many Nicaraguans, which they saw as lingering US imperialism (LeoGrande, 1979; Gorman, 1981). The US had previously occupied Nicaragua from 1927 to 1933. The main opposition against this occupation was led by Augusto Cesar Sandino. Sandino was eventually assassinated but subsequently turned into the embodiment of anti-US sentiment (Prevost, 1990).

The FSLN took heavy inspiration from the Cuban revolution, which was most prominently seen with the adoption of the foco theory and the Marxist-Leninist ideology (Prevost, 1990).

Governmental actions

The government of Somoza was a highly personalistic regime, with him being the unquestioned ruler. Somoza's regime was based on two pillars of support, the National Guard and the United States (LeoGrande, 1979). The middle class and other elites thus had no real positions in government. This led to a lack of attachment of the middle and upper class with the regime (Dix, 1984).

The event which initiated the disillusionment of the middle and upper class with Somoza was the Managua earthquake in December 1972 (LeoGrande, 1979; Prevost, 1990). The earthquake devasted the city of Managua, the capital of Nicaragua. Foreign funds soon arrived in an effort to alleviate the suffering and rebuild the city. But instead of allocating the funds to relief efforts, Somoza used most of the money to enrich himself (LeoGrande, 1979; Gorman, 1981). This visible act of government corruption disillusioned many moderates with the regime. Somoza also utilised the earthquake to extend the Somoza's economic imperium, further angering the middle and upper class who were left with less power and economic opportunities (Gorman, 1981). Another breaking point came with the assassination of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro in January 1978. Chamorro was regarded as the leader of the moderate opposition against Somoza (Pearson, 1997). The killing of such a prominent opposition figure had a detrimental effect on Somoza's support (Bye, 1982; LeoGrande,1979). As Gorman (1981) states: "The suspicion that Somoza was behind the assassination of Chamorro, in turn, caused the bourgeoisie to abandon the dictatorship almost en masse." (p. 136).

This anger of large parts of society with Somoza eventually led to a popular uprising in September 1978 which was harshly repressed by the National Guard. The National Guard decimated the cities where the uprisings took place, leading to thousands of deaths (LeoGrande,1979). The ruthlessness of the National Guard in turn led to a surge in guerrilla membership, and the moderates who did not join chose to actively cooperate with the FSLN (Blanc, 2012; Bye, 1982).

Movement tactics

The FSLN was remarkable for its strict adherence to the foco theory of Che Guevara (Childs, 1995). It argued for a rural-based guerrilla movement which would build up power over time. This strict adherence to foco lessened with the defeat of Che Guevara in 1967, leading to more attention being given to the urban wing of the movement (Gorman, 1981). This new focus on urban support was further increased after the killing of FSLN leader Carlos Fonseca in 1975 (LeoGrande, 1979). After his death, the FSLN internally split into three factions. One of these, the Terceristas, chose to advocate for a unified opposition with the moderates to oppose Somoza. To entice the support of the moderates the Terceristas changed its rhetoric to include ideals which were more universal; such as democracy, freedom, and nationalism (Bye, 1982; LeoGrande, 1979). This welcoming stance of the Terceristas eventually led to the moderates also opening up to the FSLN. This is best seen

when the Los Doce, a group of prominent exiled moderates, argued in 1977 that the FSLN would have to play a role in the overthrow of Somoza and the government thereafter (LeoGrande, 1979; Gorman, 1981). It also led the guerrillas to cooperate with moderate opposition parties like the Broad Opposition Front (FAO) and the Patriotic National Front (FPN) (Blanc, 2012).

The Insurrectional Tendency faction was also the only faction which argued for continuing military operations (Pearson, 1979; Gorman, 1981). These were mostly symbolic attacks, such as those on National Guard bases. Especially the raid on the National Palace in August 1978, in which it captured hundreds of regime officials, signalled to the wider populace that opposition against Somoza was still active and feasible (Blanc, 2012). This continued militancy eventually contributed to the September uprising of 1978 (Gorman, 1981).

Foreign influence

The Somoza dynasty had been supported for decades by the United States (LeoGrande, 1979; Gorman, 1981). The National Guard, one of the most important tools of Somoza's power, was extensively funded by the US. The unequivocal support for the Somoza regime eventually ran its course due to newly elected US president Jimmy Carter. Carter, elected in 1977, followed a new human rights policy and the Somoza regime was used to showcase Carter's dedication to it. As LeoGrande (1979) states: "The absence of any apparent security problem in Nicaragua meant that U.S. policy there ... could be safely guided by the moral imperative of human rights undiluted by national security concerns." (p. 31).

This sudden withdrawal of US support encouraged the moderate opposition (LeoGrande, 1979). The US critique of Somoza led the moderates to believe that the US could be a potential partner in removing Somoza, thus circumventing the FSLN. But the US proved undecisive on the matter of removing Somoza or not (Brands, 2011). At times it even recalled the imposed embargo on Nicaragua to still funnel funds and weapons (Blanc, 2012). The moderates thus became disillusioned with the United States, leaving cooperation with the FSLN as the only alternative (LeoGrande, 1979).

Cuba was seen as one of the biggest sponsors of left-wing guerrilla movements throughout Latin America, and Nicaragua was no different (Brands, 2011). The FSLN was especially supported at its inception with significant amounts of funds and arms (Prevost, 1990). This strategy changed around 1968 when Cuba began to see that the guerrillas

throughout Latin America failed one after another, and as a result it lessened the supplies send towards the FSLN (Blanc, 2012). From 1968 onwards Cuba mainly acted as a safe haven for exiled FSLN members (Prevost, 1990). Cuba did play an influential role in bringing the three factions of the FSLN back together in 1979.

Rebel Armed Forces

Inception

The Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR) was founded as a Marxist Leninist guerrilla movement in 1961. Its members were disgruntled by the massive economic inequalities and general impoverishment of the Guatemalan working class (Sand, 2019). They saw this inequality as the result of the 1954 US coup which put into power a right-wing dictatorial regime. This regime was comprised of the military which cooperated closely with large parts of the Guatemalan upper class, especially wealthy landowners (May, 1999; Dix, 1984; Wickham-Crowley, 2014).

The FAR also took inspiration from the Cuban revolution and tried to implement the foco theory. The FAR though proved unsuccessful in creating a rural support base (Sand, 2019; Wickham-Crowley, 2014). The lack of rural and indigenous support eventually led to the destruction of the FAR in the early 70s, with some elements managing to escape to the Guatemalan jungle (Allison, 2006; Wickham-Crowley, 2014). In the mid-70s guerrilla movements again sprung up. Noticeable were the EGP and ORPA, both guerrilla movements which split off from the FAR (Wickham-Crowley, 2014).

Governmental actions

The government of Guatemala managed to destroy the first phase of guerrilla activity with its counterinsurgency in the 1960s. Once guerrilla movements rose up again in the mid-70s, the regime began with targeted assassinations of those who were perceived to be supportive of the guerrillas (May, 1999). In 1977 there were a number of major protests and demonstrations throughout Guatemala. The government, feeling threatened, decided to conduct a brutal counter-insurgency in the rural hinterland (Sand, 2019; Wickham-Crowley, 1990).

The counter-insurgency entered a new phase with the election of President Efrain Ríos Montt in 1982. Montt, considered a radical even for the Guatemalan army and elite,

initiated a new phase of the counter-insurgency which was specifically hostile to the indigenous Mayan population (Sand, 2019; Wickham-Crowley, 2014). Any indigenous peasant suspected of sympathising with the guerrillas was murdered, leading to the death of thousands. Montt also utilised a scorched earth policy to destroy the livelihood of the indigenous population (Wickham-Crowley, 1987; Sand, 2019; Streeter, 2006). The land which was acquired by the army after driving off the indigenous peasants was in turn rewarded to influential elites (May, 1999).

The government also made extensive use of paramilitary groupings which were called civil defence forces, these were made up of local civilians (Remijnse, 2001; Sand, 2019). These individuals joined due to ideological reasons but were also often forced by the government. These paramilitaries conducted a range of essential tasks for the military: "Besides acting as an information network for the military, they were also forced to take over military tasks as sweeping areas for guerrillas and attacking so-called subversive villages." (Remijnse, 2001, p. 456). The Guatemalan intelligence agency also proved very successful in tracking down many urban sympathisers of the guerrillas (Wickham-Crowley, 2014). In the summer of 1981, the Guatemalan army conducted several targeted attacks in which it raided over 30 safe houses and arms caches, essentially destroying the urban support base (Bibler, 2007).

Movement tactics

The Guatemalan guerrilla movements were characterised in the 1970s by their cooperation with the indigenous peasant population of Guatemala, which was represented in their cooperation with the indigenous political organisation the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC) (May, 1999; Wickham-Crowley, 2014). The indigenous population supported the guerrillas due to being repressed for decades by the Guatemalan elite (Sand, 2019). This support also coincided with the mostly indigenous faction of the FAR returning to Guatemala in 1972, eventually forming the EGP (May, 1999). Most of the urban support for the guerrillas came from the PGT, the Guatemalan communist party (Allison, 2006). While the FAR and PGT were initially allies this relationship quickly soured and eventually led to a decisive break in cooperation (Wickham-Crowley, 2014). Another guerrilla movement which sprung up from the FAR, the ORPA, actively sought the support of the middle urbanite class (Allison, 2006). They focused on urbanites, but still stressed the importance of indigenous values: "... the indigenous question remained the driving force behind the organization and

had to be a central concern of non-indigenous recruits." (Bibler, 2007, pp. 26-27). The ORPA's effort proved successful and it managed in cultivating an urban support base[1].

The attacks of the guerrillas were focused on the Guatemalan infrastructure (Sand, 2019). These attacks led to a significant reduction in the number of tourists, which in turn led to an even worse economic situation. As Sand (2019) states: "Guerrilla sabotage of the economy affected the poor population proportionally higher than it affected the rich, ..." (p. 58). The guerrillas also proved themselves unable to protect the indigenous population during the brutal counter-insurgency of 1982. This led to large numbers of indigenous peasants abandoning the guerrillas in the hope that their lives would be spared (Wickham-Crowley, 1987).

Foreign influence

The United States in the 1960s supported the Guatemalan government with training its armed forces in counterinsurgency, but in return, it wanted the Guatemalan government to better the conditions of the poor (Streeter, 2006). Especially these US demand concerning better living conditions for the lower class, which was meant to steer them away from communism, angered the Guatemalan elite. This hostility of the Guatemalan elites towards the reforms strained the relationship between the US and Guatemala (Brands, 2011; Streeter, 2006). US economic and military aid was almost completely cut-off in 1977 due to Jimmy Carter's new emphasis on human rights (Sand, 2019). This loss of support from the US was not detrimental to the Guatemalan regime because, due to the already strained relationship, US support had not been a pillar of the regime's power (Wickham-Crowley, 2014).

Cuba supported the FAR just like it did many other Latin American guerrilla movements (Jacobs, 2021). It was especially in this start-up period that Cuba provided the fledgling guerrillas with arms, funds and training (Streeter, 2006). This material support decreased in the late 1960s when Cuba saw no real progress made by the FAR (Jacobs, 2021). The most significant influence Cuba had was its effort to combine the different guerrilla movements into one organisation in 1982, named the URNG (Allison, 2006). The URNG was not to last however, splintering apart during the 1982-85 counterinsurgency.

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[1] The size of ORPA's urban wing has not been well documented, thus making it hard to measure the impact of the urban wing (Bibler, 2007, P. 27).

Comparison of the cases

H1: "A *closed government and a counterinsurgency which does not differentiate between moderates and radicals greatly increases the chance of a violent movement succeeding.*"

When comparing the governments of Nicaragua and Guatemala we can see some overlap, but also some significant differences. The government of Nicaragua used excessive force to repress the uprising of September 1978 which took place primarily in large cities. The repression thus took place in an urban context. This meant that middle and upper-class urbanites were directly impacted by the savageness of the regime. The Guatemalan repression on the other hand, especially the savage counter-insurgency from 1982 to 1985, took place primarily in the indigenous hinterland (Sand, 2019). Byman's (2008) theory of the government needing to actively differentiate between moderates and more radical elements during a counterinsurgency can thus be seen here. Somoza made the mistake of using excessive violence to repress both urban-based moderate opponents to his regime and the rural guerrillas. This in turn alienated large parts of society and drove them towards the guerrilla's cause. The Guatemalan regime used a far more discreet counterinsurgency to repress urban guerrilla supporter. It chose to specify its attacks on safehouses and arms caches. The excessive violence in Guatemala was instead preserved for the hinterlands and its indigenous population which was seen as the guerrilla's core support base. By conducting a far milder counterinsurgency in the urban centres the Guatemalan government was able to retain the support of moderate urbanites.

There is also another element of Byman's (2008) theory which is applied in the case of Guatemala and which is lacking in Nicaragua, namely the use of in-group policing. The in-group policing of the civil defence forces in Guatemala, which were comprised of local peasants, proved to play a vital role in countering the influence of the guerrillas. The Nicaraguan government on the other hand relied entirely on its National Guard to suppress the guerrillas, which proved unable to infiltrate the rural community (Blanc, 2012).

Dix's (1984) theory on the influence of a regime type is also visible when comparing both cases. The regime of Somoza was highly personalistic and relied on the National Guard and US support for maintaining power. This meant that many upper and middle-class Nicaraguans were given no positions of power. This in turn led them to have no self-preserving interest in the survival of the regime and opened them up for a negative coalition. The Guatemalan government on the other hand was based around a powerful alliance of the military and the upper class. This regime, essentially an oligarchy, gave power to influential

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actors which in turn bound them to the survival of the regime. This prevented the potential shift of elites towards a negative coalition.

Somoza, who maintained power with his small clique, managed to dissociate the middle and upper class from the regime. The counterinsurgency by the regime was not well conducted, with no differentiation made between urban moderates and radical guerrillas and lacking an in-group police force. This lack of attachment of the moderate classes, coupled with subsequent actions by the regime which further angered and alienated these groups, eventually drove them into a negative coalition with the FSLN. This coalition in turn proved important in getting the FSLN in power.

Middle and upper-class support for the Guatemalan government never really wavered due to its beneficial cooperation with the military. The counterinsurgency differed in brutality depending on the urban or rural context and it made extensive use of in-group police forces. The combination of these elements eventually led to the defeat of the FAR and its fellow guerrilla movements.

When looking at the empirical evidence of both cases, it can be said that hypothesis one holds true. The way the regime is structured and the actions undertaken by the government during a counterinsurgency can have a considerable influence on violent movement success.

H2: *"The tactics and efforts of a violent movement to attract and cooperate with various social groups greatly increases the chance of the movement succeeding."*

When comparing the tactics of both guerrilla movements there are some interesting differences. Barrera (2009) argued that movements which utilise a so-called dual strategy have a better chance of succeeding. This dual strategy is found in both movements, but in differing degrees. The FSLN Insurrectional Tendency faction chose to actively seek the support of middle and upper-class moderates. To do this the faction chose to adopt a milder rhetoric, thus following the dual strategy. The ORPA in Guatemala also focused on middle and upper-class moderates, but it did not alter its message. The ORPA kept to its indigenous-based rhetoric initially used for the rural peasants. The ORPA thus did not use the dual strategy effectively by utilising the same rhetoric for all social groups.

Weitz (1986) and Childs (1995) also theorised that cooperation between a violent movement and urban supporters was important to overthrow a government. This cooperation

between the guerrillas and urban moderates was certainly visible in Nicaragua. The FSLN actively sought cooperation with moderate groups such as Los Doce, the FOA and the FPN, in turn securing their backing and expanding FSLN influence. The FAR on the other hand did not have such relations. Even cooperation with the ideologically close PGT was rocky, to say the least. The guerrillas instead chose to cooperate with rural-based organisations such as the CUC.

Greig, Mason and Hamner (2016) theorised that symbolic attacks would increase popular support for the movement. This is best seen in the FSLN. The FSLN chose to attack highly symbolic targets, such as National Guard bases and the national palace. These attacks indeed cultivated popular support and contributed to the 1978 uprising. The Guatemalan guerrillas on the other hand focused on economic sabotage to hinder the regime. These tactics distanced the wealthy moderates and also disproportionally hurt the poor.

Parts of the FSLN thus actively sought the support of urban moderates and altered its rhetoric to better target this group. It also cooperated extensively with moderate organisations, which in turn increased the strength and legitimacy of the FSLN. The symbolic attacks, especially the one on the national palace, kept the FSLN in the spotlight and cultivated further support. The Guatemalan guerrilla movements on the other hand rigorously kept to their indigenous rhetoric. They also proved unsuccessful in finding moderate organisations to cooperate with. Their violent attacks, focused on the infrastructure, also proved unsuccessful in cultivating a wider support base and instead alienated potential partners.

When comparing both cases with each other and with the theory it can be said that hypothesis two also holds true. The ability and efforts of a violent movement to cultivate, and cooperate with, moderate urban supporters considerably increases the chance of violent movement success.

H3: *"Foreign support to a movement, and the lack of it to a government, greatly increases the chance of a violent movement succeeding."*

The governments of Nicaragua and Guatemala both had the backing of the United States. This support included both military equipment and counterinsurgency training. Weitz (1986) theorised that foreign support to a government could lessen the chance of a violent movement succeeding. Both governments though received little to no US support after

Jimmy Carter was elected in 1977. The counterinsurgencies both took place after 1977, thus making US support not as influential. When we look at the conducted counterinsurgencies there is no sign that the US training significantly improved the success of the counterinsurgency forces. Both governments still used excessive amounts of violence in their campaigns. The US training was also not focused on in-group police forces, like the Civil Defence force in Guatemala which received no US training.

Instead of influencing the counterinsurgency, the United States might instead have influenced the support bases of both regimes. This effect was not previously theorised, but did seem prevalent during the analysis of the cases. Somoza had made US support an important pillar of his regime's power. Once this fell away, the middle and upper class began to see the removal of Somoza as a far more plausible possibility. The consequent US indecisiveness regarding the removal of Somoza eventually drove the moderates to seek cooperation with the FSLN. The elites in Guatemala on the other had been angered by previous US demands for reforms. This drove these elites into further cooperation with the Guatemalan army (Brands, 2011).

Cuba was the biggest foreign supporter of both guerrilla movements. Domínguez (1986) and Singh & Mei (1965) theorised that such foreign benefactors could help the survivability, and in turn success, of a violent movement. This theory does not seem to hold up in the cases, especially in Guatemala. The FAR during the 1960s, when Cuban support was most significant, was effectively destroyed. The subsequent resurgence in the 1970s didn't have a lot to do with Cuban support. The FSLN also didn't seem to be heavily impacted by Cuban support in the 1960s, with the guerrillas being far more active in the 70s (Pearson, 1979). The biggest influence Cuba had was in regard to the unification of both movements. Cuba helped to bring the FSLN factions back together, though internal differences remained sharp (LeoGrande, 1979). The opposition against Somoza in 1979 was also so immense that even a more fractured FSLN would probably have succeeded in ousting Somoza. Cuba also managed to merge the different Guatemalan guerrilla movements into one organisation, the UNRG. But the UNRG in 1982 simply proved unable to withstand the brutal counterinsurgency, the merger thus not seeming to have had any significant impact.

When both cases are compared in regard to the influence of foreign actors, it can be said that foreign influence can increase the chance of violent movement success. But this effect, especially compared to the other two hypotheses, seems far less influential. US support had no real impact on Guatemala and the stability of the regime. In Nicaragua, the US did play a part in incentivising moderate opposition against Somoza, but was simply one

of many the factors which drove the moderates to oppose Somoza and into cooperation with the FSLN. Cuban material support, and its efforts of uniting both movements, also did not have a significant impact on the guerrillas. Wickham-Crowley (2014) and Prevost (1990) also state that the influence of foreign actors did not seem to play a decisive role. Other factors, like the ones discussed before, thus seem to have a far greater impact on violent movement success. Hypothesis three is thus rejected.

6. Discussion

When comparing both guerrilla movements and answering the three hypotheses there is one significant difference, namely the support of the middle and upper urbanite classes. These middle and upper-class individuals, which tended to comprise the moderate opposition, differ in both cases regarding their stance towards the government and in turn towards the guerrillas. The analysis shows that the FSLN enjoyed considerable support from rural peasants but over time also from influential moderates. These moderates, due to a number of reasons discussed above, opposed Somoza and began to see cooperation with the guerrillas as the only available course of action to remove him from power. The FAR and other Guatemalan guerrilla groups lacked this group of supporters. Most of the middle and upper class remained loyal to the regime, the reasons of which are again discussed above. This urbanite moderate support thus seems to play an essential intervening variable in the relationship between the theorised IVs and the DV of violent movement success.

All in all, it appears that the answer to the research question is that wide popular support, especially that of the moderate urban-based middle and upper class, is the reason why some violent movements manage to succeed. The research has further shown, with the acceptance of hypotheses one and two, that the actions of both the government and the violent movement itself play a very important role in determining the support of this group. Foreign actors, as seen with the rejection of hypothesis three, have a far less influential effect.

7. Conclusion

Violent social movements, especially compared to non-violent ones, tend to fail. Just a handful of movements have managed to achieve success through violent means. The question thus arises of why some violent movements manage to defy the odds and end

victoriously.

Current literature which has tried to answer this question has come up with a number of different theories. Some see the government as the essential factor influencing violent movement success. Others focus on the violent movement itself and argue that its own actions can bring about victory. Then there are also some who argue that foreign actors play a large role in determining the success of a violent movement.

The goal of this thesis was to give a more conclusive answer as to why some violent movements succeed. This was done by conducting a qualitative content analysis and a subsequent comparison between two guerrilla movements, namely the successful FSLN and the unsuccessful FAR.

The analysis and comparison have shown that the support of urban moderates, often comprised of the middle and upper-class, towards a violent movement has a significant influence on the chance of success. This support is in turn mostly determined by the actions and structure of the government, and by the effort of a violent movement to cultivate this support base. The support of urban moderates is thus an important intervening variable in the relationship between certain actors, such as the movement and government, and eventual violent movement success.

This study is of course not without limitations. The focus of this paper was on violent guerrilla movements. Other violent social movements, such as terrorist organisations, might have different goals and thus in turn depend on other elements for such success. This thesis has also made use of sources dating back to the 1970s and 80s. A drawback of this is that the authors could have potentially been influenced by the zeitgeist of the cold-war.

Future research could look into the question of why some governments manage to conduct targeted attacks against urban supporters of a violent movement, like the ones seen in Guatemala in 1981. Such targeted attacks appear to be detrimental to urban support and thus also to violent movement success, making it an interesting subject to further explore.

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